

DIFFERENCE AND CONVERGENCE: THE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND THE EPISCOPAL AND THE REGULARIZING OF ORDERS

Do not shut your eyes to scandal, or your ears to hissing. But have them open to the glory, and it is the glory of Christ in his saints. If you want to be a Christian, you have your duty to the scandal and to the glory, both.

--Archbishop William Temple

In an age when ecumenical relations have been one of the principal items of concern among the historic churches of the Christian faith, the similarities of these churches, and the regrettable fact of their divisions, have been the focus of most of the major inter-church initiatives. We are often less interested in re-visiting the differences, partly because some of those differences have been rendered minimal by time or circumstances, but even more because of the embarrassment they might generate or the potential they have for jeopardizing the good will upon which ecumenical efforts in large part rest. Dealing with differences, however, cannot be postponed forever. And especially in the particular case I am presenting -- the movement of clergy of the Reformed Episcopal Church to the Episcopal Church -- dealing with the differences may actually have to be the place to begin.

One reason for this is that, until very recently, the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Church have seemed to have very little except their differences to discuss, when they were interested in discussing them at all. This is actually surprising in one sense, since the Reformed Episcopalians are, so to speak, Episcopal 'family': formed as a denomination in 1873 by Bishop George David Cummins (the eighty-first bishop in the American Episcopal succession and second bishop of the diocese of Kentucky), the Reformed Episcopalians were the culmination of a generation of inter-church strife between Episcopalian evangelicals

and Episcopalian Anglo-Catholics, strife which it was clear by 1870 the evangelicals were (in political terms, at least) losing. Cummins, as one of the leaders of the evangelical party, originally gave no suggestion that he thought the solution was a schismatic abandonment of the Episcopal communion. In fact, the circumstances which finally triggered Cummins to lead a schismatic departure were actually tangential to the evangelical/Anglo-catholic contention, and revolved around Cummins's agreement to participate in celebrating an inter-denomination eucharist at the famous 1873 international convention of the Evangelical Alliance (which incidentally involved the Dean of Canterbury as the Archbishop of Canterbury's personal emissary) in New York City. "It was a practical manifestation of the real unity of 'the blessed company of all faithful people' whom 'God hath knit together in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of his Son, Jesus Christ,'" Cummins wrote. Anglo-catholic traditionalists, however, were horrified at Cummins's joint celebration with non-episcopal clergy, and it was the severity of Anglo-catholic criticism of the Dean of Canterbury, along with the threat of the Episcopal bishop of New York, Horatio Potter, to initiate a presentment of Cummins, which convinced Cummins that the sun was about to set on evangelicals in the Episcopal Church, and on December 2, 1873, Cummins and six other priests of the Episcopal Church declared the organization of the Reformed Episcopal Church around a four-point 'Declaration of Principles' and a promised revision of the Book of Common Prayer.

The oddity, then, of dealing with the differences of the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Church in an age of ecumenical relations is that the

Reformed Episcopalians were, so to speak, a schism in the name of unity, a division in the name of ecumenicity. And it was partly from the embarrassment this gave the Episcopal Church that the seeds of Episcopal ecumenicity in modern times were sown. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral and the inter-church labors of Frederic Dan Huntington (himself the brother-in-law of a Reformed Episcopal bishop, Samuel Fallows) were partially a response to the Reformed Episcopal schism, and they laid out as generously as possible in the 1880s the grounds upon which Episcopalians would pursue ecumenical union. The presence of the Reformed Episcopalians continued to hang on the horizon of Episcopal Church for a generation thereafter, since the simple fact of the Reformed Episcopal Church's existence and the circumstances surrounding their founding remained a standing question posed against the sincerity of Episcopal ecumenicity, and endeavours to heal the separation continued to pop up sporadically between 1885 and 1941 (the last of those being initiated by no one less than Bishop Frank Wilson of Eau Clair, one of the leading spokesmen for catholic traditionalism in the Episcopal Church).

That reminder, however, did not hang very heavily upon too many minds in the Episcopal Church, specially after Wilson broke off his discussions in 1947 in frustration with Reformed Episcopal indecision. This was because, frankly, the Reformed Episcopalians became easier and easier to ignore over time. The death of the first generation of Reformed Episcopal clergy (virtually all of whom had been trained and ordained in the Episcopal Church) cut off vital personal links to the Episcopal Church and dampened down voices of personal concern within the

Episcopal Church for re-union and reconciliation; the new generation of Reformed Episcopal leadership bred solely within the Reformed Episcopal Church felt no personal connection to the Episcopal Church and tended to over-emphasize the differences which their elders had pegged their lives to; and, in the simplest terms, the Reformed Episcopalians did not show significant growth. Although the Reformed Episcopal Church grew rapidly in its first two decades to include diocesan and provincial jurisdictions in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, the growth slowed dramatically after 1900, and the Canadian and British jurisdictions drifted away into oddball moribundity or (in the case of Canada) into virtual eclipse; in the United States, the Reformed Episcopalians reached a high of approximately 40,000 (adult communicants plus baptized members) by 1900, but fell back toward 20,000 by 1930, and to little more than 6,000 communicants by the 1980s. As the membership of the Episcopal Church soared over the same period to over 2 million, it became easy, in terms of numbers, for Episcopalians to ignore the Reformed Episcopalians as an irrelevancy, and to turn attention to more numerically meaningful ecumenical relations with other, larger, church bodies.

AND TO MANY REFORMED EPISCOPALIANS, THIS also seemed quite acceptable, as the Reformed Episcopal Church proceeded, from 1873 onwards, to implement differences and departures from the Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion without significant concern for what those differences and departures might mean for the continuity of their Anglican and Episcopal identity.

These differences can be seen in the classic areas of ecumenical concern -- baptism, eucharist and ministry -- as well as in aspects of worship and polity.

1. Baptism: At the time of the Reformed Episcopal founding, Anglicanism was, in large measure, already moving away from what Paul Avis has called 'the Erastian paradigm' (in which the Christian identity of the church was shaped by secular, political and dynastic considerations) to an 'apostolic paradigm' in which the identity of the Church of England and its offspring provinces in the United States and elsewhere was shaped instead by its conformity to apostolic patterns and the possession of a ministry in tactual succession to the apostles. This 'apostolic paradigm' was the product in most senses of the Oxford Movement, and it presented an original, and in the circumstances necessary, solution to a dilemma posed by the increasing political diversity and secularity of English society, and by the fact that the American Episcopal church was both politically and culturally unable to function under the Erastian premises that had governed the Church of England since the Reformation.

Evangelicals in the Anglican Communion had rarely rested easily within the 'Erastian paradigm.' In Evangelical theology, the critical moment of spiritual identity arrived by and through the individual's spiritual renewal: that meant that evangelicals would have scant regard for Christian identity which was conferred by citizenship, and equally scant regard for leadership and structures which confirmed that. They demonstrated this scant regard for Erastianism all through the Evangelical Revival in the Church of England (1760-1830) by preaching outside the official

structures of the Church of England, organizing societies which acted as para-church alternatives to the Church's official structures, and by converting Evangelical parishes into isolated bastions of Evangelical experience. It became possible, as Dom Gregory Dix once remarked, for an Evangelical clergyman to be born, confirmed, ordained, instituted and buried without encountering any ideas newer than the Crimean War.

It also meant, though, that Evangelicals would regard the Oxford Movement's alternative to Erastianism, the 'apostolic paradigm,' as no real improvement. What Evangelicals came to embrace was what Avis has called 'the baptismal paradigm,' in which Christian identity is established on the basis of shared Christian principles irrespective of national (Erastian) considerations or denominational (apostolic) ones. What it also meant, however, was that Evangelical labored to define baptism itself in ways which stood off starkly from either the Erastian or apostolic model. For Evangelicals in the Episcopal Church in the 19th century, this resistance crystallized around the Prayer Book baptismal formulae, and especially around the three references to the mystical washing away of sin, to regenerate this Child, and Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this Child is regenerate. It was pointed out repeatedly in the 19th century controversies that the actual meaning of regenerate in the 16th century context might be something rather different from 19th century usage; but notwithstanding, Evangelicals balked at this as example both of loose Erastianism and of a theory of transmission of grace which was of a piece with Anglo-catholic notions of ministry and priesthood, and several sensational ecclesiastical trials arose, such as the Gorham case in the Church of England and the

Cheney case in the Episcopal Church, over the decision of Evangelical clergy to delete such language from the baptismal office.

Consequently, once the Reformed Episcopalians had detached themselves from the Episcopal Church, they lost no time in revising both their theology of baptism and the baptismal liturgy to match this concern. The Reformed Episcopal Declaration of Principles explicitly singled out the idea that "Regeneration is inseparably connected with Baptism" as "erroneous and strange," and the Reformed Episcopal baptismal liturgy was amended in its 1875 revision (of the 1801 Episcopal Book of Common Prayer) to delete all of the references to 'regeneration' and 'mystical washing.' In fact, a serious effort was made to radicalize the entire practice of baptism in 1875 with a proposal (ultimately unsuccessful) to include a liturgy for the 'dedication of infants' which would suspend even the use of water. The driving force behind both of these emendations was the question of identity: if Episcopal baptism declares its subjects regenerate, but Presbyterian does not, can there be a shared Christian identity between the two? If Baptists do not use water in Christian initiation but Episcopalians do, can there be even a shared paradigm of initiation. Determined that the shared identity was the greater priority, Reformed Episcopalians were inclined to break down any walls that might inhibit the sharing of evangelical identity with non-Episcopalians, and so the baptismal office was vetted with a view toward making the fact of initiation, however it was accomplished, the foundational aspect of Christian identity.

Nevertheless, it should be said that whatever the violent disagreements over

the interpretation of baptism, the fact of baptism was never questioned by Reformed Episcopalians, and in surprisingly large measure, the givens of baptismal practice never underwent any significant change. The Declaration of Principles quite forcibly declared that the Reformed Episcopal Church believes in the "divine institution of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper." And liturgically, baptism remained among Reformed Episcopalians what, to all outward signs, what it was for Episcopalians: (a) a rite of initiation applicable to infants and adults, (b) a washing performed with water, (c) celebrated in the name of the Holy Trinity, and (d) signed with the cross (this is certainly how I have performed baptisms within the Reformed Episcopal Church, and I know of no exceptions). Indeed, apart from the deletions of the controversial phrases on regeneration and washing the Reformed Episcopal baptismal rite remained virtually word-for-word what it had been in the 1662 and 1801 Books of Common Prayer. Ironically, the Reformed Episcopal revisors left unchanged the lessons appointed for the baptismal office, which pointed in precisely the interpretative direction they were hoping to escape; and they retained the traditional collect for Eastern Even, which also linked baptism with the washing of redemption and salvation.

Still interpretation can mean a great deal within families. And so, however, minor these distinctions might appear, liturgically and theologically, they set Reformed Episcopalians decisively off from the larger Anglican world for a very long time, as long in fact as the 'apostolic paradigm' had genuine force in Anglicanism. The waning of that paradigm, together with the unassailable fact of

modern social diversity and pluralism, worked to subvert the dominance of the 'apostolic' after the 1920s, and both the modern Liturgical Movement and the wider drive toward ecumenicity in the Anglican communion have introduced changes in the understanding of baptismal identity which have significantly shifted the amount of perceived difference between the Reformed Episcopalians and the Episcopal Church. In fact, the entire movement of baptismal theology as it was articulated liturgically from the 1956 Church of England Liturgical Commission onwards, was, as the late R.C.D. Jasper wrote in The Development of the Anglican Liturgy, 1662-1980 (1991), was to shift the emphasis to an "invitation into the new life by death and resurrection with Christ and not on the removal of the taint of original sin." And, that, almost co-incidentally, comported remarkably easily with the concerns of the Reformed Episcopalians in their own baptismal liturgy. Modern Anglican rites of initiation, such as the 1979 Book of Common Prayer and the Alternative Service Book of the Church of England clearly place the act of baptism (pp. 307-309, 1979 Book of Common Prayer) in the context of the larger congregation's acts (rather than as the solo gesture of the clergy), stress the role of baptism as an incorporation into the "household of God," and plainly locate baptism, not as an end in itself, but as the beginning of a journey by "an inquiring and discerning heart."

The influence of the ecumenical movement has also worked to shorten the distance which once seemed so great between Reformed Episcopalians and the Episcopal Church. The Lima instrument, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, has eloquently set up the standard of the 'baptismal paradigm' in ways which both

Reformed Episcopalians and the larger Anglican Communion can, and have, mutually applauded. BEM has established as priorities in the understanding of baptism (a) incorporation into the body of Christ (b) response to the divine gift of grace and (c) the gift of the Holy Spirit, and these have been reflected both in Episcopal liturgical practice and in the larger context of Anglican-Orthodox, Anglican-Lutheran, and the ARCIC ecumenical discussions.

Almost as an echo of these developments, confirmation practices within the Reformed Episcopal Church have responded to this emergence of the 'baptismal paradigm' in almost exactly the same way as they have in the Episcopal Church and the Church of England. As with baptism, the Reformed Episcopalians of the 19th century found much to criticize in the 'apostolic paradigm' and the implications this had among Anglo-catholics for confirmation. The Catechism in the Reformed Episcopal Prayerbook answers the question "What is confirmation," with the reply, "Confirmation is not a sacrament, but an ancient rite of the Church, derived from the custom of the Apostles of the laying of hands on those who had been baptized." And the Confirmation rite still concludes with the notation that "The Administration of the Order of Confirmation is confined to the Bishops, not as of divine right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of Church usage." Hence, the Reformed Episcopalians resisted any kind of elevation of confirmation to a sacrament, or to a second-stage of baptism or to a metaphorical 'ordination of the laity' manifested in the words of one Anglo-catholic, F.W. Puller:

...although in baptism the Holy Ghost operates and works on the soul by His purifying, consecrating, and regenerating influence, yet. He does not impart His indwelling Presence until He is given in a new way by the laying on of hands. ...In baptism the Holy Ghost pours down gifts of grace, which, as coming from Him, may be called gifts of the Spirit; but in confirmation He imparts, not merely gifts of grace, but himself.

This remained, as late as the Church of England's 1944 report Confirmation Today, the dominant model in Anglicanism.

But since the earliest days of the Liturgical Commission, numerous Church of England writers pointed out that this conception of confirmation bears only a doubtful connection with the New Testament evidence upon which it is supposed to be based. As E C Whitaker remarked, most of what we know as confirmation originated, not with the Apostles, but in the baptismal liturgies of the Western Church, perhaps as early as the mid-second century, where baptism and confirmation were in fact indistinguishable. And now, Reformed Episcopal teaching and practice on baptism has swung firmly behind the 1986 Knaresborough Report on confirmation, and has clearly articulated the centrality of baptism as the universal instrument of Christian identity (and thus admission to the eucharist, as well) and confirmation as the domestic instrument for building and encouraging faith.

Consequently, what Reformed Episcopalians and Episcopalians teach about baptism have undergone a historic convergence. Together, Reformed Episcopalians and Episcopalians will stress that:

(a) Baptism is a constituent part of the gospel. As far as the apostles are concerned, the overwhelming majority of conversions which are recorded in the New

Testament include baptism as a unity with the conversion itself. Peter urges his hearers on Pentecost, in one breath, to repent and be baptized; when the Samaritans heard the Gospel from Philip they at once submitted to baptism, and shortly thereafter, when Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch, the Ethiopian's first response to the Gospel was "See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?" In all of these cases, submission to the gospel and submission to baptism are naturally considered to be parts of one act. As Bishop Colin Buchanan comments,

It is fair to say that the New Testament knows nothing of the unbaptized Christian.there was no catechumenate, no probationary period, no time of instruction prior to baptism in the New Testament. The longest gap between 'conversion' and baptism is the three days of Saul [Acts 9:9] -- and even then it may be more appropriate to count his conversion from the same time as his baptism, for he was in darkness until then. In all other cases baptism and conversion are so closely entwined that the beginning of the Christian life can be traced equally easily to the inward or the outward.

(b) Baptism identifies people as Christian To receive baptism in the New Testament was to be treated as a believer -- this meant that either one lived up to that baptismal profession, or that one patently contradicted the baptismal identification as Christian. But either way, those who were baptized were treated as part of the community; those who were unbaptized, no matter what their profession otherwise, were assumed not to be part of the fellowship. Baptism was the essential outward mark, and there seems to have been no middle ground conceived of: no members of the fellowship who remained unbaptized, no professions of conversion which were not followed by baptism, and no treatment of the unbaptized as fully Christian.

In sum, the Reformed Episcopalians anticipated, however dimly perceived, many of the developments in baptismal practice and theology which have come to be understood as the foundations of modern ecumenical practice, and consequently find little difference remaining between modern understandings of initiation between themselves and the Episcopal Church.

2. Eucharist Like baptism, the understanding of the eucharist was a contentiously disputed topic between evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics in the 19th century, reflecting as in baptism the conflict of the 'apostolic' and 'baptismal' paradigms. The Oxford movement, and the 'apostolic' paradigm generally, exalted eucharistic celebration not only in terms of its frequency and centrality in Christian worship, but also in terms of the grace it was understood to convey -- hence, the contentions swirled around not only the liturgical place of the eucharist but around anglo-catholic insistence that the eucharist constituted a miraculous conveyance of grace by means of the corporealization of the Body and Blood of Christ in the wine and bread of the eucharist. In the 'Erastian paradigm,' the eucharist was converted into what amounted to a state occasion: one 'conformed' and became eligible for full participation in the national life of England by means of a yearly communion, and the principal work of the 'apostolic paradigm' was to replace this relatively dead and spiritless notion of the eucharist with a dynamic participation in the Body and Blood of Christ. But as with baptism, evangelicals operating within a 'baptismal paradigm' had no more use for the apostolic than the erastian solution. The centrality in evangelical experience of personal spiritual renewal tended to subsume the eucharist

to that renewal as though the eucharist was a sort of spiritual reward for renewal, rather than a means to it (Bishop Stephen Neill remembered elderly communicants in his missionary diocese in India who recalled that the eucharist was offered only twice a year, and each occasion was the signal for a thorough moral housecleaning). In fact, the residual suspicion evangelical Protestants harbored toward Catholicism, together with the latent Calvinism of the 1662 Communion rite, stiffened evangelical resistance to any concept of the eucharist which arose higher than mere spiritual instrumentality. At the farthest extreme, the eucharist might be an occasion of purely spiritual feeding on Christ, at the least, it was a spiritual reminder of the need for continuous renewal.

This attitude was initially registered among many Reformed Episcopalians, and once again it served to distance them from the directions toward which the larger Anglican world was heading at the turn of the century. In 1875, the Reformed Episcopal Church decided that, not only the Prayer Book, but the Articles of Religion themselves required overhauling in order to eliminate "Romish germs." Much of this revision was aimed directly at the questions concerning the eucharist: the Church of England's Articles insisted that the sacraments are "not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him." But skittish Reformed Episcopalians could not endure even that suggestion that the sacraments conveyed substantial grace on their own, and so the Reformed

Episcopalians in 1875 re-wrote the article to read: "By the word Sacrament this Church is to be understood as meaning only a symbol or sign divinely appointed " And the eucharist in particular was strictly redefined as "a memorial of our Redemption by Christ's death, for thereby we do show forth the Lord's death till he come "

We feed on Christ only through his word, and only by faith and prayer; and we feed on Him, whether at our private devotions, or in our meditations, or on any occasion of public worship, or in the memorial symbolism of the Supper.

This anxiety was reflected in several contemporary Reformed Episcopal documents in 1877 one of the principal architects of the revision, Bishop William R Nicholson, declared in a widely-circulated booklet bearing the official imprint of the Reformed Episcopal Publication Society that in the Lord's Supper, "the bread and wine are only representatively the body and blood of Christ." Nicholson wanted it clearly understood that he would have nothing to do with any interpretation of the sacraments which defined them as signs of a spiritual reality or presence Contrariwise, Nicholson insisted it was impossible, in the light of how the New Testament described spiritual bodies, to speak of a "spiritual presence" of Christ in the Eucharist without admitting the existence of a physical corporeal presence at the same time This, Nicholson pointed out, was especially true of Christ himself, who, although he declared that his resurrected body was spiritual, also challenged his disciples to touch him and feel him If Christ's body was to be present spiritually in the Lord's Supper, Nicholson argued, then it must also be corporeal, too But since no such corporal presence could be seen and handled in the Supper, then it was evident that the Supper contained neither a corporeal nor a spiritual presence of

Christ

We have, then, the right to demand that the senses should adjudicate this question. Accordingly, it was on the very question of the presence or the non-presence of His spiritual body, that Jesus expressly appealed to the senses of his followers. Handle me, and see, he said; touch me, look at me, and decide the question for yourselves. If the spiritual body of Christ be either in place of the bread, or in the bread itself, it is there as real "flesh and bones," and therefore the fact that our senses do not find Him there is proof positive that He is not there

It is true, Nicholson acknowledged, that Reformed Episcopalians "must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man " However, Nicholson sternly qualified that declaration by limiting that action to the believer's exercise of faith at any point in time "We believe that, as reading the truth on the written page, or as hearing it preached, or as revolving it in our minds, or as having it symbolized to our hearts in the Supper, in any or all of these methods we do by faith eat and drink the Lord Jesus "

The important thing to bear in mind, though, is the word anxiety The traumatic circumstances of the Reformed Episcopal schism were precisely the sort to induce both sides to a radicalism of rhetoric which may have exceeded the real intentions At the same time as Nicholson was restricting a sacrament to the status of sign, Bishop Cummins's 1874 pamphlet, The Lord's Table, and Not the Altar, declared that Reformed Episcopalians found "the Reformed theory of the Communion...unspeakably ..precious and sacred," and he denied that Reformed Episcopalians meant to "disparage its true value and preciousness." Accordingly, Cummins established that "the Lord's Supper is then first of all a commemoration of our great High Priest, who hath 'passed into the heavens.'" Likewise, Cummins

added, it was also a confession of faith in the power of Jesus' sacrificial death and in his coming again. "And yet more," he continued, "the Lord's Supper is a precious means of grace to the believer, in which Christ hath ordained the elements of bread and wine to be signs and seals of his favor...."

Christ's presence at the Supper is a presence not in the elements, not on the altar, not received in the hand and by the mouth. It is a presence manifested to the soul, received by faith alone. Thus alone we partake of His body and blood, that is, receive the benefits flowing from his death by faith, feed on Him in our hearts by faith. For, says the twenty-eighth article 'the means by which the body of Christ is received an eaten is by faith;' and if it be by faith it cannot be by the mouth.

This, of course, is undiluted Cranmer, even down to Cummins's espousal of the receptionist interpretation of the Lord's Supper offered in the Thirty-Nine Articles

In fact, the further one moves away from 1873, the traumatic year of the founding of the Reformed Episcopal Church, the more apparent it is that Reformed Episcopalians never intended that their doctrine of the eucharist should be one of symbols and signs only, or that they meant to depart from the doctrine of the English Reformers and the Church of England. Bishop P F Stevens's Elementary Catechism of 1887 asks,

Q. How many parts are there in a sacrament?

A. Two; a sign that we see, and a thing which the sign stands for, but which we do not see.

Q. What is the good of taking the communion?

A. We are doing what our Lord told us to do, and are proclaiming His death.

Q. What else are we doing?

A. True Christians are eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood by faith in the spiritual way He said we should.

The 1894 Catechism for Children and Members of the Reformed Episcopal Church

asked, "What meanest thou by this word SACRAMENT?" and answered

A. I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.

Q. What is the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper?

A. Bread and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received.

Q. What is the inward part or thing signified?

A. The Body and Blood of Christ, which were given for us.

Q. What are the benefits whereof we are partakers thereby?

A. The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, which was given and shed for us.

Today, as in baptism, Reformed Episcopal and Episcopal/Anglican practice find that they have, now that the smoke of ecclesiastical battle has long drifted away, fewer differences to discuss than they thought. The Reformed Episcopal Prayer Book fairly dispels any misconception that its intention is to limit the function of the sacraments to signs: the Catechism contained in the Prayer Book describes a sacrament as "an outward and visible sign ordained by Christ himself, of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us," and in the case of the eucharist, "the Body and Blood of Christ are spiritually taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." Also, as in the discussion of baptism, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that the divergences between Episcopal and Reformed Episcopal have centered on matters of interpretation, with only comparatively minuscule liturgical results. The Reformed Episcopal communion office is virtually indistinguishable from the 1662 communion rite (omitting as 1662 does, but as the American Prayer books do not, an Invocation and Oblation, relocating the Gloria to the Post-communion, and omitting from the Post-communion prayers any phraseology which suggest of corporeal eating of the Body and Blood of Christ). Indeed, in the last decade, the Reformed Episcopal

Church has moved increasingly toward making the eucharist a parish communion and the principal Sunday-by-Sunday worship of the church.

By the same token, the modern communion rites of the Episcopal Church and the Church of England have also moved beyond the 'apostolic paradigm' to the affirmation of all the baptised to participate in the eucharist. Furthermore, the concentration of the efforts of the Liturgical Movement on the eucharist have produced a dramatic consensus within Anglican liturgiology that, as the Episcopal Church's 1953 report of the Standing Committee on Prayer Book Revision explained,

The general fact is that the comprehensiveness of the Church, especially in the latitude of belief about the Eucharist which is permitted by all the Anglican liturgies, is something much more than an expression of the celebrated 'genius for compromise'. It is based upon a recognition of the fact that the sacraments are exactly what the Greeks have always called them, namely "Mysteries." They are realities which we experience, but which are beyond the capacity of the human mind completely to comprehend.

Reformed Episcopalians have yet to come to terms with the depth of patristic and liturgiological research which has gone into the recovery and incorporation into modern Anglican liturgies of the rich traditions of the Catholic and Orthodox, but this is largely a result of the meagreness of the Reformed Episcopalians' own resources. As it is, Reformed Episcopalians have no trouble endorsing the Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry definitions of the eucharist as a thanksgiving, an anamnesis which constitutes a living and effectual representation of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, as an exhortation to our self-offering as a living and holy sacrifice, and as a communion of the faithful. In fact, Reformed Episcopalians would even express the very same reservations which many of the Anglican Provinces have

expressed concerning ARCIC I's use of the word anamnesis, preferring to state that this anamnesis concerns a unique and unrepeatable self-offering of Christ, made present to the communicant not merely on the basis of the communicants faith, but on the power of the Holy Spirit. The celebration of the Eucharist, although tied to older Anglican liturgies, is still nevertheless anchored in Anglican assumptions and realities, and like the communion rites of both the 1979 Book of Common Prayer and the ASB, it includes the essential ecumenical elements of

- hymns of praise
- an act of repentance
- a declaration of pardon
- liturgical proclamation of the word
- creedal confession of the faith
- intercessions for the Church and the world
- preparation, thanksgiving and institution of the sacrament
- epiklesis, consecration, anamnesis, and manual acts
- eating and drinking of the community
- benediction

and in the once-universally familiar structures of the 1662 Prayer Book

3. Ministry All ministry, strictly speaking, belongs to the whole people of God as a gift. Bishop Geoffrey Paul, in one of his ordination charges, reminded his hearers that:

The Church of God is not divided into two groups, two unequal elements, clergy and laity, but the people of God is what it says it is.

It is all and only laity, and it needs to be glad of it and remember it all the time. Clergy are laity, with a special calling, a special anointing, a special function and they are a special sign that God means redemption for all the world, but they remain laity, and woe betide them if they ever forget it.

However, attempting to realize that dynamic has proven exceptionally difficult, especially when one is posed with the challenge of housing the universal call to ministry within a hierarchical framework. And on no other point did the Reformed Episcopalians seem to indulge more serious departures from Anglican models or create wider potential for irreconcilable differences. No part of the 'apostolic paradigm' so offended evangelicals as the claim that the bishops of the Episcopal Church possessed, by virtue of their consecration in a direct historic line to the apostles, an exclusive power to convey ministerial grace to priests and deacons, since this obviously disenfranchised the ministries of all other evangelical and Protestant churches lacking episcopal orders, and, in a specific sense, shifted the grounds for ministerial authority onto grounds far removed from the credentials of spiritual renewal that evangelicals prized so much into a quasi-mechanical idea of 'apostolic succession.'

The question of 'apostolic succession' went right to heart of the Reformed Episcopal founding, since Cummins's participation in the Evangelical Alliance's joint ecumenical eucharist was a de facto repudiation of apostolic succession' and a recognition of the validity of non-episcopal ministries, and the Reformed Episcopal Articles "wholly rejected" 'apostolic succession' as "unscriptural and productive of great mischief." And in its most dramatic departure from Anglican models of

ministry, the Reformed Episcopal has provided in its canon law for the welcoming into its ministry of non-episcopally-ordained presbyters from other denominations without requiring regularization or re-ordination (Title III, Canon VI). It even has included in the Reformed Episcopal Prayer Book a service for reception which makes it clear that the clergy of other denominations are being welcomed 'as is'

This, perhaps more than any other development, has served to re-inforce the distance and alienation of the Reformed Episcopalians from their origins. But it would be well to recognize several important features of this development before closing too quickly to judgement:

(a) the Church of England itself, while requiring both regularization and re-ordination, has never been entirely of one mind on this subject, has made numerous exceptions to the re-ordination requirement, and has never explicitly endorsed all the aspects of 'apostolic succession' which evangelicals in the last century found so distasteful. Neither the 1662 Book of Common Prayer nor the Articles of Religion ever actually articulated a doctrine of 'apostolic succession' along traditionalist Anglo-Catholic lines, and the Parliamentary statute which laid down the proper qualifications for holding ministerial office in the Church of England, "An Act for the Ministers of the Church to be of sound Religion" (13 Elizabeth I, c 12), required only that foreign ministers coming into the Church of England, and ordained with "any other form of Institution, Consecration or Ordering" than that of the Church of England, simply subscribe to the Articles of Religion. Norman Sykes's sensational Old Priest and New Presbyter (1956) provocatively pointed out that we

still find ministers from the Church of Scotland and others with ordinations among the English Presbyterians still being taken into the Church of England without a requirement of re-ordination well after the 16th century founding of the Church of England. And when at last the Church of England closed its door for good on non-episcopally-ordained clergy in 1662, the measure was largely aimed at policing English dissenters rather than unchurching non-English Protestants

(b) modern ecumenical practice militates against this. Just as the Church of England never came to the point of following along after the Tractarian lead concerning the succession -- although the Church of England will insist upon re-ordaining any other minister who chooses to enter its ranks -- it has shied away sharply from claiming that it alone possesses the right to make true ministers through its bishops. The ministers of other churches have always been considered to exercise 'ministries of grace,' and the areas of recognition and shared ministry between Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and the Free Churches have been rapidly widening over the past decade. Joint communion services have been passe for years, especially at convention spots like the British Keswick, and canons B43 and B44 allow bishops and clergy of the Church of England to preside at eucharist in non-Church of England churches, and even participate in ordinations in non-episcopal churches up to, but not including, the point of laying-on of hands. Similarly, non-episcopally ordained clergy are allowed to assist at funerals, weddings, eucharistic, and regular services in Church of England and Episcopal parishes without re-ordination, provided the rector in charge and the parish council agree (see Title III, Canon 20 of the

Episcopal Church canons). And currently, both the 1979 Prayer Book and the ASB ordination and consecration rites describe ordination and consecration apart from anti-ecumenical claims to an exclusive bestowal of the Holy Ghost or any other supernatural powers. The 1979 Prayer Book has the Presiding bishop at an episcopal consecration pray that God will make the new bishop "a bishop in your Church" and asks that the power of the Spirit may be poured out on them, rather than construing the episcopate after the papal model.

Even in the Roman Catholic Church, ecumenical concerns have led to careful re-statements of just what 'apostolic succession' ought to mean, and the emphasis has clearly pointed against unnecessary exclusivity. Wilhelm Brenning, writing in Sacramentum Mundi, concedes that "The preaching of the conservative office-holder is not a mechanical repetition of apostolic formulae -- which would require no charism -- but, in response to each given situation, a proclamation of the Lord whom the apostles preached, communicating himself by means of the faith preached and accepted by the Church, and so re-presenting his primary mystery. Even more dramatically, Piet Fransen has urged that the gift of 'character' in ordination be understood as the conferring of ecclesiastical rank, rather than supernatural substance:

There is no common doctrine of the character in theology. ...The tendency in question has promoted a mythic theology of the priesthood which places it on a higher level of being than the rest of the faithful, a metaphysical clericalism which is responsible for barring the way to many reforms at the present time. ... We believe that the more realistic notion of the character as held in ancient times should be taken up again. The character is above all the visible rite of ordination by which the ordinand is legitimately incorporated into the college of his "order." This incorporation implies a number of rights and duties. Its principle element is the mission of service with regard to the

community of the Church and of all mankind.

The challenge, then, becomes how to preserve a notion of 'succession' which will serve the demands of a working and historic hierarchy, while avoiding the pitfalls of a notion of ministry which walls off the laity from the clergy. As Archbishop Carey has written:

...the doctrine of the apostolic succession, which has been so much abused and so much misused, should be carefully distinguished from the narrowly defined and mechanical notions of its 'transmission' which have, all too often, been the basis upon which it has been both defended and attacked. At its heart is precisely the recognition that the special ministry is a gift of God, too, in and through the Church, and that continuity in office and responsibility is one of the signs of the continuity of the whole Church in the faith and witness of the apostles

The wholesale repudiation of 'apostolic succession' by the Reformed Episcopal Church might seem at first glance to err on exactly the opposite side from this statement. But it has to be said that the Reformed Episcopal rhetoric on this subject, reactionary as it sounds, has not been entirely matched by the Reformed Episcopal practice. Much as Reformed Episcopalians promised a radical re-thinking of the episcopate, in actual fact, the Reformed Episcopal episcopate has remained conformed to the pattern of the Anglican episcopate described in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral as "the historic episcopate." The Reformed Episcopal episcopate was conveyed through a regularly consecrated Episcopal bishop -- Cummins -- and it has been conveyed after him through an ordinal which differs scarcely at all from the 1662 and 1928 ordinals. The Episcopalian historian, Raymond F. Albright, has conceded that "although there was ground for calling this episcopate irregular, since on two occasions at least it has been perpetuated through

consecrations by a single bishop, there was never any question about the validity of the orders of this Church." Moreover, the Reformed Episcopal General Council Journals carry a carefully-maintained succession list, in which it is clear that no Reformed Episcopal bishops in this century have been consecrated from ecclesiastical sources other than the Reformed Episcopal Church itself. Even in the most recent cases, Reformed Episcopal bishops have organized a separate House and moved decisively away from the older view that bishops were merely "first among equals," while clergy from non-episcopal churches have been increasingly asked to submit to a regularization and conditional re-ordination process. No non-episcopally-ordained clergy have ever been received into the Reformed Episcopal Church as bishops. In that respect, then, the Reformed Episcopal Church has done less to the episcopate than it threatened to do.

This is particularly true concerning the specific functions assigned to the office of bishop. In the most general terms, both the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Church describe the bishop as the chief pastor of a diocese (the Reformed Episcopal term used to be synod to emphasize the collegiality of the bishop among the presbyters, but in 1992 it was felt that this terminology distanced Reformed Episcopal organization too much from the general Anglican model, and so diocese was adopted as the common term for a bishop's jurisdiction). The bishop is a teacher and guardian of the faith, the chief sacramental minister of the diocese (with the privilege of celebration in every parish), the ordinary of clergy and confirmer of the laity, and the representative of the diocese in the larger counsels of the Church.

The specific canons describing the work of bishops in the Reformed Episcopal Church (Title III, Canon IX) detail processes of election which are identical to those of the Episcopal Church (Title III, Canon 21), and although the canon detailing the procedures for the consecration of a Reformed Episcopal bishop permits presbyters to join with the officiating bishops in the consecration, the principal officers at a consecration have always been other bishops, and the practice of involving presbyters has generally ceased. The Reformed Episcopal canons also detail the procedures for selecting missionary bishops, and provide for the resignation and retirement of bishops, in the which case they retain their title (unlike the Lutheran model of the episcopate) and their vote in councils. Suffragan bishops and co-adjutor bishops are also consecrated to serve with diocesan bishops. And this, once again, conforms to the specifics of the Anglican episcopate as described in both the Episcopal Church canons (Title III, Canons 22 through 24) and the Canons of the Church of England (Canon C18 and C20).

The same is true concerning the priesthood. Although the Declaration of Principles declared that the Reformed Episcopal Church recognized no priesthood "in another sense than that in which all believers are 'a royal priesthood,'" and adopted the term presbyter rather than priest as its designation for the clergy, the ordination rites and the responsibilities of Reformed Episcopal presbyters are, for all practical purposes, interchangeable with those of Anglican and Episcopal priests. In fact, one might say that Reformed Episcopalians practiced more closely the idea of R.C. Moberly's 'ministerial priesthood' than many of their Anglo-catholic counterparts.

There is, as Moberly said, more to being a priest than merely the word "There are not only priestly functions or priestly prerogatives, there is also a priestly spirit and a priestly heart--more vital for true reality of priesthood than any mere performance of priestly functions " The Reformed Episcopal canons specify requirements for education, discernment and examination (Title III, Canons V and VI) similar to those in the corresponding Episcopal canons (Title III, Canons 7 through 9) Reformed Episcopal presbyters are required to be installed by the diocesan bishops, maintain registers of confirmations, marriages, communicants, and burials, make annual reports to vestries, arrange for episcopal visitation, and be responsible for presiding at the eucharist, "teaching or hearing the Word of God, in public and private prayer" according to the Reformed Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, and "in other exercises of devotion" (Title III, Canons VIII, XII, and XIII) Both the Episcopal and Reformed Episcopal canons contain very specific direction about the supervision of music in ministry and the consecration of properties only when ownership requirements have been fully satisfied (EC Title II, Canons 6 and 7, REC Title III, Canon VIII, sec. 4 and Title III, Canon XIV).

The diaconate has undergone the most substantial change of the three orders over the last twenty years, from being strictly a preparatory grade before ordination to the presbyterate, to a diversified order of permanent and probationary deacons As in the Episcopal Church canons (Title III, Canons 6 and 13) and the Church of England canons, deacons are understood to be under the most immediate oversight of the presbyter they are assisting or under the diocesan bishops, and may function,

under license of the bishop, as a Minister-in-Charge of a parish (Title III, Canons III and IV). In times of clergy shortages, deacons have been licensed to celebrate the eucharist (as in fact they were in the early history of the Episcopal Church) but this practice has been largely discontinued. However, the new developments in the diaconate of the Reformed Episcopal Church have proceeded far out in front of canon law, and the Reformed Episcopal canons still offer a disappointingly sketchy view of the ministry of deacons. But this, of course, is a frustration which has been very largely shared with other Anglicans who are also trying to develop a satisfactory definition of the ministry of deacons; that, in an ironic way, only confirms the basic Anglican shape of the Reformed Episcopal Church's ministry

Currently, there are no provisions in Reformed Episcopal canon law for deaconesses, archdeacons, deans or other specialized ministries. In terms of lay offices, the Reformed Episcopal canons provide only for churchwardens and the licensing of lay readers (Title III, Canon X, and Title IV, Canon IX) as compared to the substantially more expansive offices and responsibilities in the Episcopal canons (Title III, Canons 3 and 28 through 31) and Church of England canons (Canons E1-E8), but parishes in the Reformed Episcopal are governed through lay vestries and churchwardens as parishes in the Episcopal Church (EC Title 1, Canons 13 and 14, REC Title IV, Canons VII through IX), although with the significant difference that title to parish property in the Reformed Episcopal Church is vested in the parish itself rather than the diocese. There are no canons in Reformed Episcopal Church canon law or in the rubrics of the Reformed Episcopal Prayer Book which govern the

vestments of the clergy, and the customary vestments are consequently cassock, surplice and stole for deacons and presbyters, and rochet and chimere for bishops (I have never yet seen a chasuble or alb used in a Reformed Episcopal church, although nothing prevents this from being done. The Reformed Episcopal Church canons make no specificity as to gender in detailing the requirements for ordination, and any historically gender-specific language in diocesan canons has been, by standing resolution, understood to be intentionally neutral of application (as is also the case in Title V, Canon 2, section 2 of the Episcopal canons).

NONE OF THIS IS SAID WITH A VIEW toward diminishing the interpretative differences which have separated Reformed Episcopalians and Episcopalians on issues concerning the ministry, or to suggest that the process of regularization and/or conditional re-ordination is not an appropriate procedure in such cases as mine. It merely underscores that the differences of attitude and interpretation which caused, and then perpetuated, the Reformed Episcopal schism should not occlude the fundamental resemblance of the parent and its temperamental offspring. Great as the differences have been, they tend to be, unlike differences between Presbyterians and Episcopalians, or between Presbyterians and Lutherans, differences within the family of Episcopalians, rather than from it.

As such, the general polity of the Reformed Episcopal Church remains very decidedly an historically hierarchical and episcopal polity. Like the Episcopal Church, "the direction of all matters which concern and belong to and affect this Church as a

whole, are and shall be vested in its General Council," which corresponds in all practical details of its membership to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church (its title, General Council, was derived from the name adopted by the governing assembly of the Episcopal Church in the Confederate States during the Civil War) Its governing document, like the Episcopal Church, is its Constitution and Canons, and although these are prefaced by a non-revocable Declaration of Principles (they same Declaration composed in 1873 by George David Cummins) even that has Anglican precedent in the 'Declaration of Principles' of the Anglican Church of Canada. Like the General Convention, the General Council is a triennial event, and its chief officer is a Presiding Bishop elected for a three-year renewable term from the ranks of the diocesan bishops (generally, the re-elections are pro forma and once elected as such, the presiding bishop usually retains this office until retirement) The Council itself relies on an interlocking structure of committees, including both standing and special committees, a publication society, a sustentation fund, and a board of pensions and relief. Representation in the Convention is by delegation from each parish rather than from diocesan conventions (unlike the General Synod of the Church of England or the General Convention -- see the Episcopal Constituion, Article 1, section 4).

Reformed Episcopal polity tends toward a somewhat more democratic rather than hierarchical spirit in its deliberations, and there remains substantial resistance to mere clericalism. But that acts as a corrective in the interest of establishing that the authority of the Church rests ultimately on the fullness of the life of Christ as it

inheres in the Church, and does not disrupt the overall similarities in polity which exist between Reformed Episcopalians and Episcopalians.

Taking the longest view, the Reformed Episcopal Church embodies a historic division within, rather than an outright departure from, the life of the Episcopal Church, a division triggered by the intense political conflicts of the 19th century and its warring ecclesiastical parties. If its ministry, sacraments, and polity reflect differences at various levels, those will usually prove to be domestic differences, and often involve the preservation of styles and attitudes going back to the last century. The size of the Reformed Episcopal Church has not permitted it the opportunity to develop many of the diversities of the modern Episcopal Church, in many cases, the peculiar practices of the Reformed Episcopalians turn out, on closer examination, to be the normative practices of the Episcopal Church in the 1870s, frozen (as it were) in place by the traumatic circumstances of the Reformed Episcopal founding. "We have not met to destroy, but to restore; not to pull down, but to reconstruct," George David Cummins at the founding of the Reformed Episcopal Church, "We are not schismatics (no man can be a schismatic who does not deny the faith); we are not disorganizers; we are restorers of the old; repairers of the breaches; reformers "

The Reformed Episcopal founders were not fleeing from Anglicanism, so that they could set up something new, they aimed instead to preserve a Protestant Episcopalianism which, until the mid-nineteenth-century, had been the only Episcopalianism anyone had really known. Alexandrine Cummins recalled in 1880 that when her husband

left home, position, influence, and friends, to found the R.E.C., he had no wish that it should be a Methodist or Presbyterian Church. He dearly loved the Church for which he had spent the best years of his life, and when he could no longer minister at her 'altars,' or see her simple liturgy changed into a poor imitation of the gorgeous ritual of Rome, his own wish and intention was to bring together those who were true Protestant Episcopalians, that they might form a pure Church, free from Romish germs -- but this was all. Had he wished to unite with his Presbyterian, or Methodist, or Reformed brethren, he could have easily done so; and great suffering and sacrifice on his part would have been saved. But when asked, in Nov., 1873, whether he meant to unite with either of these sister Churches, he answered, 'No; I wish a pure Episcopal Church, that it may be a refuge for those who, like myself, prefer a liturgical service.' The writer was present when Bishop Cummins revised the communion office with one of his dear brethren, when a suggestion was made for further changes. The Bishop replied, 'No, we only want to take out all that can be interpreted as teaching false doctrine -- the rest should remain as it is. The fewer changes we make the better; ours is an Episcopal Church, and we do not wish to do away with our offices and liturgy.'

Similarly, Bishop Charles Edward Cheney insisted that the Reformed Episcopalians had determined that "when we should organize as a separate Church, it must not be a Methodist, nor a Presbyterian, nor a Congregational, but an Episcopal Church."

Cheney found the best evidence of this determination to preserve that Episcopal identity intact in the simple fact that Cummins had organized the Reformed Episcopal Church on his authority as an Episcopal bishop, and not merely as an individual.

"And when at last Bishop Cummins lifted the standard of reform, he came forth to lead the van, full-panoplied. He came from the old Church as a bishop " That alone, in Cheney's mind, secured beyond question the intention that the Reformed Episcopal Church should be an extension of the history and life of Anglicanism. The Reformed Episcopal Church was to be Episcopal in the fullest and most historically meaningful sense of the word, and not merely "episcopal" because of the political accident that it

was to be governed by bishops. Bishop Herman S Hoffman likewise re-iterated,

It is in one sense not a new Church, but is as old as the English Reformation. It has the old ministry, Bishops, presbyters (it does not call them "Priests") and Deacons. It has the old Creeds, the old Prayers and the old Services in the good old way. ...We are not a new Church. We are the true members of the old Protestant Episcopal Church. ...Therefore the Reformed Episcopal Church is a Refuge for Churchmen who hold Evangelical doctrines and are Protestant in their views and principles.

"We were not Presbyterians," Dr. Mason Gallagher insisted in 1889, "We desired a liturgy. We were loyal Episcopalians...."

This means that this paper has tended to dwell more upon convergences than differences, simply because comparatively fewer of those differences exist in this connection than in other ecumenical initiatives which the Episcopal Church has undertaken. Recognition of the preponderance of convergences over differences was what led in 1988 to the beginnings of an initiative between the Episcopal Church and the Reformed Episcopal Church toward what the 1988 General Convention called "a healing of this division." And in the context of modern ecumenical relations, it has to be said that there is tremendous symbolic importance in the Episcopal Church's willingness to attend to the only historic division in its own house, even as it seeks to set an example of ecumenicity to others. It is my hope that in asking for admission to the non-stipendiary priesthood of the Episcopal Church, my situation offers a leading-edge opportunity to illustrate the seriousness with which the Episcopal Church takes healing, in however small or specific a fashion, and welcomes home even its prodigals.

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